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Editorial: Baldwin helps U.S. troops

An editorial
April 28, 2003

In the aftermath of the Iraq war, politicians are jockeying for position as supporters of the troops. But, for the most part, they are simply looking for a picture to use in their next campaign brochure or television ad.

Only a few officials respect members of the armed forces enough to develop programs that will ensure that the men and women who serve their country are not let down by the U.S. government - as were victims of post-traumatic stress disorder, radiation exposure after World War II, complications from the use of Agent Orange in Vietnam, and Gulf War syndrome. U.S. Rep. Tammy Baldwin, D-Madison, is one of the few.

Baldwin's Servicemembers Health Protection Act would implement the National Academy of Sciences recommendation to establish centers across the nation for the study of war-related illnesses. Baldwin wants these centers to be based on a model similar to the Geriatric Research, Education and Clinical Centers, a program administered under the authority of the Veterans Health Administration. The clinical centers model emphasizes conducting cutting-edge research, training health care professionals, and implementing effective treatment programs for patients in the region in which each center is located.

Under the Baldwin plan, active members of the military and veterans would have a good deal more assurance that, if they develop new conditions related to their service in Iraq and Kuwait, they would have access to the best research and care.

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